

# Larimer County Medical Reserve Corps

Larimer County Department of  
Health and Environment



# **Medical Reserve Corps Role in Mass Influenza Vaccine Clinics**

By

Ann Watson and Phyllis Hale



# Objectives

- Describe the role of MRC volunteers in a mass immunization clinic
- Explain the process of selecting, training, and assigning volunteers
- Discuss lessons learned and how MRC could be deployed in other kinds of mass immunization clinics



# Emergencies and disasters

**We can't predict when, where, or how serious they will be.**

*“Our first response to a disaster is always a local response.”*

VADM Richard H. Carmona, M.D., Surgeon General



# **2003 - Local emergency in Larimer County, Colorado**

## **Public Health Emergency declared**

- West Nile virus disease outbreak overwhelmed Public Health capacity

## **MRC Responded**

- Disease investigations
- Public education and outreach.



# 2004

## Disaster struck again

- Influenza vaccine shortage nationwide
- October 5 – Chiron (vaccine manufacturer) cancelled all flu vaccine delivery to US.
- Result - vaccine supply reduced by half



## Local Headlines

### Vaccine shortage hits home

Health officials plea: If you aren't at risk, don't get a flu shot

By PAT FERRIER

PatFerrier@coloradoan.com

### Flu vaccine problems filter down to county

Larimer's supply tight as flu shot season nears

By KATE MARTIN

until early 2005.

Watson said the U.S. Food and Drug Administration sent a team to look at Chiron's operations on Tuesday, but she is skeptical about whether the lab would be reopened.

Chiron's problem began in August, when it discovered contamination in a small amount of vaccine, which delayed its U.S. shipments. Still,

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### High-risk patients to get shots

By DOUGLAS CROWL  
Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

The Larimer County Department of Health and Environment has 250 doses of influenza vaccination available for Loveland residents.

#### Children a priority for vaccination

County health officials hoped to have 1,500 doses by this time, but so far they only have 770.

Federal government wants people to 'relax' regarding

son said that effort is ongoing. Finding vaccine, determining how much is available and informing people about their options has been a huge job, she said.

#### Flu shots for children

Children at high risk of suffering complications from influenza can receive county shots. Children from 6 months to 23 months of age regardless of health status are highest priority for the flu vaccine.

Children and teens from 2 years through 18 years of age having any the following medical conditions will qualify for the vaccine:

tem such as HIV/AIDS.

- Children and teens up to 19 years of age receiving long-term aspirin therapy.
- Children and teens 6 months to 19 years of age who are household contacts of babies younger than 6 months of age.
- Children and teens 6 months to 19 years of age living in nursing

# Public Health Crisis ??

## Actual or Perceived ?

- Crisis was real in public health ability to respond
- Deep budget cuts stretched resources thin
- Local ability to assure access to health care (flu vaccine) severely challenged
- CDC Guidelines – ration vaccine to highest risk people





# Public Health Challenge

- Locate existing supplies of vaccine in County
- Identify where the need exists
- Devise a system for distributing limited supplies to highest risk people
- Find a way to locate and deliver vaccine with limited health department staff



# **The Solution: Deploy Larimer County Medical Reserve Corps**

- Select the right MRC volunteer for the job
- Train volunteers for various jobs
- Coordinate efforts with other providers



# Seniors targeted for flu vaccine

## Seniors quick to claim flu shots



V. Richard Hays/The Coloradoan

**HOT COMMODITY:** Seniors form a line Wednesday at the Senior Center, waiting for a number that ensures they'll receive a flu shot. The clinic administered 675 flu shots to people who began arriving about 5:30 a.m.

## Another clinic set today in Loveland

By COURTNEY LINGLE  
Courtney.Lingle@coloradoan.com

Hordes of seniors lined up for flu shots Wednesday at the Fort Collins Senior Center. The first 675 to pick up a number got what they came for, while scores more were turned away.

Those who missed out will have a second chance today as nurses from the Rehabilitation and Visiting Nurse Association, or RVNA, administer 675 vaccines at a clinic at United Methodist Church in Loveland.

But health officials recommend arriving early because demand for the shots likely will outnumber the doses available.

Seniors and other high-risk adults who qualified for the Fort Collins clinic began arriving as early as 6 a.m. Wednesday to make sure they received a number.

Organizers said patients were given numbers and asked to come back so that they wouldn't have to stand in line for hours on

See FLU SHOTS/Page A2

### Today's clinic

The clinic at United Methodist Church, 533 N. Grant Ave., in Loveland, will administer shots from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with numbers being handed out before the clinic opens.

### Flu shots for kids

The Larimer County health department has at least 500 doses of vaccine for children at the present time. Flu shots will be provided as long as supplies last at the health department walk-in clinics in Fort Collins, Loveland and Estes Park. Certain low-income children may qualify for federally purchased vaccine. Full-cost private-pay vaccine is \$23 per shot.

### Clinic locations and times

■ Estes Park office, 1601 Brodie Ave., 1 to 4 p.m. Mondays and 9 a.m. to noon Wednesdays.

■ Loveland office, 205 E. Sixth St., 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. Mondays and 9 a.m. to noon Fridays. In addition, clinics are held on the second Wednesday of each month (next clinic is Nov. 10) from 4 to 6 p.m.

■ Fort Collins office, 1525 Blue Spruce Drive, 9 a.m. to noon Mondays and 1 to 3:30 p.m. Fridays. Clinics are also held on the third Saturday (next clinic is Nov. 20) of each month from 9 a.m. to noon.

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Reporter-Herald/DOUGLAS VAN REETH

Virginia Ferris of Loveland winces while receiving her flu shot Thursday at First United Methodist Church.

## Shooing the flu

### Hundreds of seniors get vaccine

### High-risk children's shots

• Loveland office, 205 E. Sixth St., Mondays from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. and Fridays from 9 a.m. to noon. In addition, clinics are also held on the second Wednesday each month (Nov. 10) from 4 to 6 p.m.

• Estes Park office, 1601 Brodie Ave., Mondays from 1 to 4 p.m. and on Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to noon.

• Fort Collins office, 1525 Blue Spruce Drive, Mondays from 9 a.m. to noon, and 1 to 3:30 p.m. and Fridays from 9 a.m. to noon. Clinics are also held on the third Saturday (Nov. 20) from 9 a.m. to noon.

Volunteers began handing out numbers for shots a little before 8 a.m., and an hour later began turning people away.

Approximately 75 people waiting at the church didn't get a number for a shot, while others were turned away throughout the day.

"It was unfortunate," said Coleen Rusech, who was given number 514. "I saw a bunch of people who really really needed one."

The country's flu vaccine supply was cut in half earlier this month because of contamination found in the vaccines by one of the country's two suppliers.

By DOUGLAS CROWL  
Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

# Get Vaccine to High Risk

- Partner with RVNA to do mass clinics
- Identify RVNA staff needs



# Recruit MRC to provide surge capacity

- Personally contact MRC with needed skills
- Assign duties in 2 hours shifts
- Allow volunteers to select jobs
- Utilize a variety of volunteer's skills and experiences



# Train and Orient MRC for clinic duties

- Role of the MRC coordinator
- Identification of volunteers (t-shirts, vests and ID badges)



# Results

- Thirty different volunteers helped staff 6 clinics occurring over 4 weeks
- 2500 high risk individuals were immunized



# Lessons Learned

- Medical reserve corps are an asset in conducting mass immunization clinics
- Get acquainted with volunteers ahead of time
- Keep volunteers involved in public health activities throughout the year
- ICS would be helpful to define roles
- Need to identify who is in charge
- Choose the facility wisely





# Conclusion

- *“The volunteer **Medical Reserve Corps** is critical to our national preparedness effort. Medical Reserve Corps volunteers provide assistance and depth to our existing local emergency teams. They augment our public health initiatives.”*

VADM Richard H. Carmona, M.D., Surgeon General



# The End

